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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BUREAU OF ENTOMOLOGY
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BRIEF INFORMATION ON THE PROTECTION OF LOG CABINS
AND RUSTIC WORK FROM INJURIOUS INSECTS

Character and Extent of Injury

Considerable damage to the unbarked logs of the principal woods used in the construction of log cabins and rustic work is caused by insects. Woods cut at certain seasons of the year are subject to attack by beetles, which riddle the bark with holes, causing sawdust-like borings to fall out and cover the wood; and by the larvae, or grubs, of wood-boring beetles, which mine the inner bark, causing it to loosen and fall off, and which bore into the sapwood and sometimes the heartwood of logs, making large holes and often reducing them almost to dust within a few months. This damage causes large financial loss, annoyance, and unsightly condition of the material.

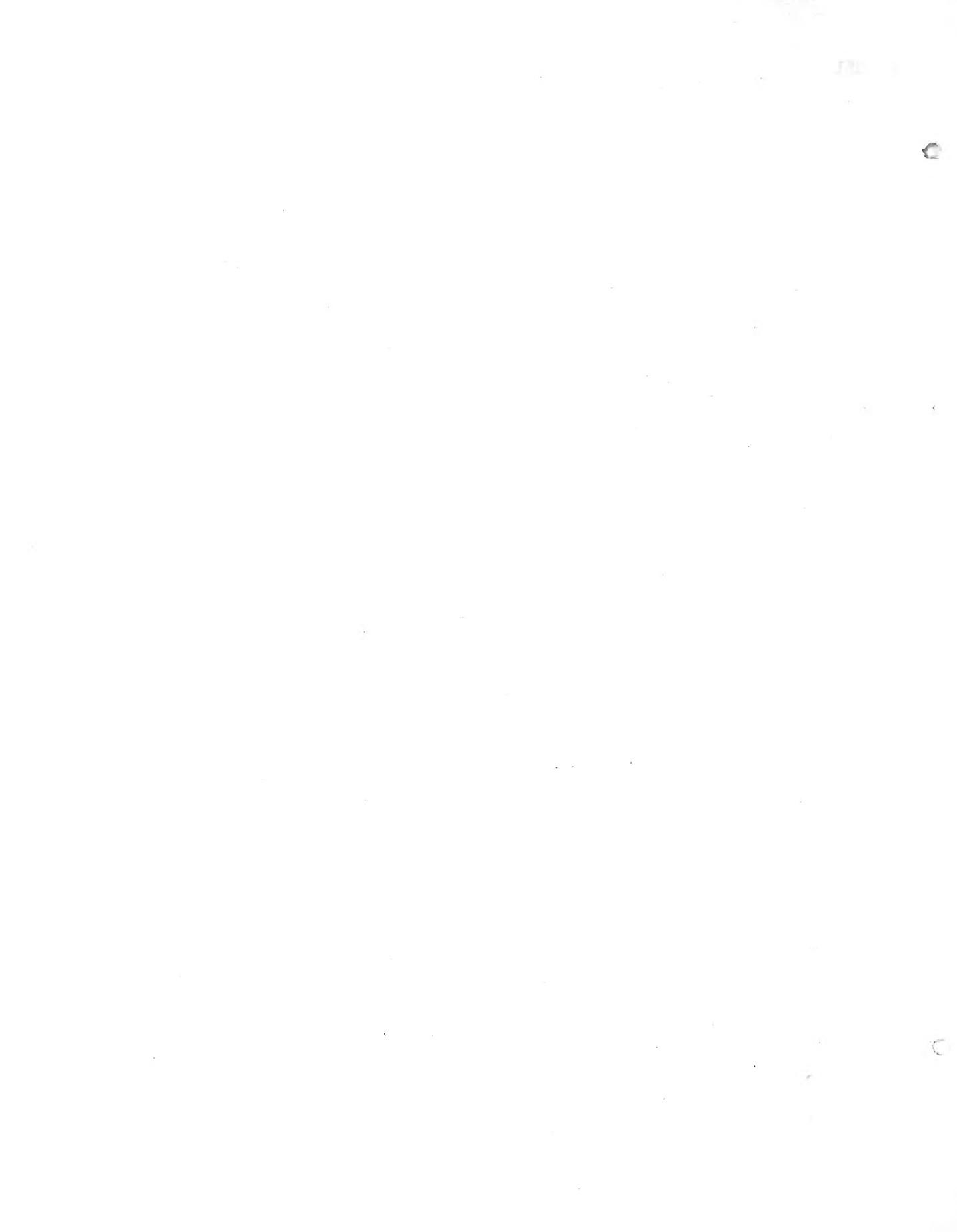
It has been found that by cutting the wood at certain seasons of the year and by treating it with protective, repellent, or insecticidal substances, practically all insect damage can be prevented or held in check.

Evidence of Infestation

In most instances the injury can be detected by the presence of the characteristic piles of reddish-brown or whitish particles of boring dust, or shredded wood fiber, which the insect makes while working in the bark or wood and which it pushes to the outside in order to clear its gallery.

Remedy

The beetles or grubs in the bark and wood can be killed by thoroughly saturating all parts with liquid orthodichlorobenzene. As it is necessary for the solution to penetrate the wood and reach the insect in order to kill it, great care must be taken to apply the liquid thoroughly. This solution is colorless and will not stain. It has a slight odor which disappears after a short while. Orthodichlorobenzene can be effectively applied either with a brush or a forceful sprayer. The spraying method is preferred since it saves much time and labor. One pint will treat a chair. Three gallons is sufficient to treat 100 square feet of log surface.



Prevention of Injury

The injury can be prevented by adopting one of the following methods:

When possible, delay the cutting of the trees for log cabins until fall (October to November) when the insects are not active, and place the logs at once in open piles, either off the ground or under cover in such a manner as to offer the best facilities for the rapid and thorough drying of the inner bark. This will prevent attack by most insects. To insure the maximum amount of protection, however, the logs should be sprayed the following spring when the insects become active. This method is especially recommended where it is desirable to retain the bark on the wood.

When it is necessary to cut the trees during the spring or summer months, treat them as soon as cut with a solution of coal-tar creosote, grade 1 liquid oil, 1 part, to kerosene, 3 parts. Before use it should be strained through burlap. The creosote stains the wood very little when diluted in this way.

When the treatment of the bark with creosote is objectionable, and the bark can be readily peeled, remove the bark from the tree in strips, treat the wood with the creosote and kerosene mixture, and replace the bark, using large-headed nails. This will prevent insect attack and preserve the rustic appearance of the wood.

Where the bark is not especially desired, fell the trees at any time of the year, although preferably in the fall, remove the bark, and brush the logs with creosote. This will give them a pleasing stain.

Wood used in the manufacture of rustic furniture should be cut during the fall and winter months and removed from the woods to a place of protection before insect activity begins in the spring.

R. A. St. George,
Assistant Entomologist.

Approved:

F. C. CRAIGHEAD,
Entomologist, in Charge of Forest Insect Investigations.

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1. The period of insect activity about Washington, D. C., extends from April 1 to October 15. Farther north insect activity would begin from two to four weeks later and end from two to four weeks earlier; farther south the season would begin two to four weeks earlier and end that much later.

